supply of election material to the Minister of Finance in 1999 by the Chairman of a Company, which is under CBI investigation.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

ALLEGED SUPPLY OF ELECTION MATERIAL TO THE FINANCE MINISTER IN 1999 BY THE CHAIRMAN OF A COMPANY WHICH IS UNDER CBI INVESTIGATION

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA): Sir, the issue of my so-called links with Shri Ashok Chaturvedi of Flex Industries was raised in this House on May 13, 2002, by hon. Member, Shri Arjun Singh. A demand for a statement from me on this issue was also made in the House. My colleague, the Minister of State for Parliamentrary Affairs, had assured the House that I would make a statement on the issue on May 15. This statement is in response to that demand and the subsequent assurance.

Sir, for my Lok Sabha election campaign in 1999, I had got some publicity material printed by a few printers in Delhi. Flex Industries, which is also in the business of printing, was one of those printers on whom I had placed some printing orders. These printed materials were subsequently despatched to me at Hazaribagh by rail. For the supplies received from Flex Industries, as indeed from other printers, regular bills were raised by these firms and full payment made to them. My records reveal that for the supplies received from Flex Industries, they had submitted five bills amounting to Rs.45,583/-. This amount was duly incorporated in my statutory return on election expenses, filed with the District Election Officer of Hazaribagh Lok Sabha constituency. These records should be available with the Election Commission and the District Election Officer.

The raids on the office of the then Chief Commissioner of Excise, Shri Someshwar, were conducted by the CBI on November 7, 2001, after which Shri Someshwar and Shri Ashok Chaturvedi were taken into custody. The investigation in the matter is being conducted by the CBI which does not fall within the area of my ministerial responsibility. The CBI is neither required to report to me, nor has it kept me updated on the progress of the case, from time to time. There is, therefore, no conflict of interest whatsoever between my present assignment and the investigation by the CBI in the case against Shri Someshwar and Shri Ashok Chaturvedi.

The fact that I purchased some election publicity material from a supplier can, by no stretch of imagination, be construed to mean that I have a relationship with him. I cannot also be expected to guarantee his good character and good conduct forever. I would like to state categorically that neither my dignity as a Member of Parliament nor my effectiveness as Minister of Finance stands compromised as a result of this entirely routine, transparent and above board transaction.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SURESH PACHOURI): Shri Arjun Singh,

SHRI ARJUN SINGH (Madhya Pradesh): Sir,...

SHRI SANGH PRIYA GAUTAM (Uttaranchal): Is there any need to seek clarification? ...*(Interruptions)*... It is a petty matter and relates to all Members who contest elections. ...*(Interruptions)*... So, there is no need for a debate. ...*(Interruptions)*...

श्री राजू परमार (गुजरात): आप बैठ जाइए ...**(व्यवधान)**... क्या बात करते हो ...**(व्यवधान)**... The Member has every right to seek clarifications. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI C.P. THIRUNAVUKKARASU (Pondicherry): Sir, everybody is purchasing. ...*(Interruptions)*...

श्री राजू परमार : स्टेटमेंट में जो भी कहा गया है उस पर पूछना जरूरी है ...**(व्यवधान)**...

SHRI S. VIDUTHALAI VIRUMBI (Tamil Nadu): Sir, everything has been mentioned in the statement. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI ARJUN SINGH: Sir, I have not uttered a ...*(Interruptions)*...

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SURESH PACHOURI): Is this a personal explanation or a statement? ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA : This matter was raised with reference to my personal conduct in the 1999 elections, I have come to the House with a personal statement, a personal clarification.

SHRI ARJUN SINGH: Sir, I have not yet opened my mouth, and Shri Sangh Priya Gautam ...*(Interrutpions)*...

SHRI B.P. SINGHAL (Uttar Pradesh): Mr. Vice-Chairman, I would like to raise a point of order. No clarification can be sought under Rule 241 after a statement is made by a Member. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU (West Bengal): First of all, he is not a Member. So, your reference to Rule 241 is absolutely invalid. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI B.P. SINGHAL: Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, the Chair has given its ruling. It is the contempt of the Chair. ...*(Interruptions)*... He is commiting a contempt of the Chair. And I would like him ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: I am questioning his point of order on the ground that Mr. Yashwant Sinha is not a Member. ...*(Interruptions)*... It is very unfortunate. ...*(Interruptions)*... There is a protective tradition in the House that if a Minister makes a statement ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI B.P. SINGHAL: Tradition cannot overrule the ruling. ...*(Interruptions)*...

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SURESH PACHOURI): Mr. Basu, please take your seat. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Sir, just one minute.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SURESH PACHOURI): You just please listen to me. The Minister can make a statement under Rule 251. As per Rule 241, one can give his personal explanation. As the Minister has stated, this is his personal explanation, as per Rule 241. If it is that, then, clarifications are not required. ...*(Interruptions)*...

AN HON. MEMBER: The Chair has given its ruling. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI S. VIDUTHALAI VIRUMBI: Sir, you have already given your ruling. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Sir, the hon. Finance Minister is a Member of the Lok Sabha. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI S. VIDUTHALAI VIRUMBI: Sir, you have already given your ruling. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI C.P. THIRUNAVUKKARASU: If the ruling has been given, why are they ...*(Interruptions)*...

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SURESH PACHOURI): Please speak one by one. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI S. VIDUTHALAI VIRUMBI: Sir, this is nothing but the ...*(Interruptions)*...

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SURESH PACHOURI): Please take your seat. ...*(Interruptions)*... Let me listen to him. ...*(Interruptions)*... Please take your seat. ...*(Interruptions)*... Yes; Mr. Basu.

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Sir, you will also find that Rule 241 holds good for a Member who is giving a personal explanation. Now, if that was the case, a statement in the Lok Sabha would have sufficed. But, he cannot give a personal explanation, as an individual Member, in the Rajya Sabha. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI S. VIDUTHALAI VIRUMBI: Sir, because the issue was raised by a Member of the Rajya Sabha, and that is why he has done it. ...*(Interruptions)*... You have already given your ruling. ...*(Interruptions)*... It is nothing but defying your ruling. ...*(Interruptions)*...

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SURESH PACHOURI): Let him speak.

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: So, with all deference to your wisdom on the Chair, Sir, I would ...*(Interruptions)*... just draw your attention to this discrepancy, and I think, Sir, ...*(Interruptions)*... this type of intolerance by the Members from the other side is curtailing the right of Members of this side of the House to seek clarifications. Even before we have said something ...*(Interruptions)*... I think, we are not irrational people. If there is something patently rational in his statement ...*(Interruptions)*... No; Sir, our rights cannot be curtailed. This is a convention. ...*(Interruptions)*... And, a convention is as good as a rule. In any parliamentary system, convention is as good as a rule. ...*(Interruptions*)... Therefore, Sir, we should not be ...*(Interruptions)*... No; Sir. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI B.P. SINGHAL: Who said that conventions are as good as rules? ...*(Interruptions)*...

6.00 P.M.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SURESH PACHOURI): Mr. Basu, if you read Rule 241, it is said, "A Member may, with the permission of the Chairman, make a personal explanation although there is no question before the Council, but in this case no debatable matter may be brought forward, and no debate shall arise." As far as the Minister is concerned, the Minister has the same right, except voting, as other Members have. *...(Interruptions)...*

Sir, he has made a statement on the basis of the assurance given by the Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs. *(Interruptions)*

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: Sir, it is not an ordinary personal explanation, in the sense that a demand was raised by an hon. Member on the floor of the House. The Government gave the assurance that a statement will be made. In response to that, it was placed on the Order Paper of the House. Of course, if the Minister is absolutely entitled to say, *suo motu,* if certain allegations have been brought against him by anybody, he can say that he would clarify his position through a personal explanation. And if the Chairman, after going through the statement, finds it all right, he can allow. On that point of personal explanation, you ruling is absolutely correct that no debate and no clarifications can be there. But, here, a very peculiar situation has arisen because an allegation was made. The Minister was not present in the House. On behalf of him, the Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs made a commitment. The Minister, while giving the personal explanation, also referred to that. In the very first part of his statement, he is saying that in response to the assurance given by the Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs, he is making this statement. Of course, we will go by the ruling given by the Chair, but, to my mind this is not an ordinary personal explanation given by any other Member. It is for the Chair to decide.

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Sir, may I quote from the List of Business? It is the last item on the Revised List of Business for today. These are procedural issues. I do not know why Members are intolerant. Today's List of Business mentions the Statement by the Minister as the last item. It says: Statement by Minister. Shri Yashwant Sinha to make a statement clarifying his position in response to matter raised by Shri Arjun Singh on 13th May, 2002. Rule 241, which deals with Personal Explanation,

says: "when there is no question before the House." In this case, there is a question and it is in response to the assurance given. So, by quoting rule 241, you cannot disallow us from seeking clarification.

SHRI DINESH TRIVEDI (West Bengal): Sir, I am on a point of order.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SURESH PACHOURI) : Under what rule are you raising your point of order?

SHRI DINESH TRIVEDI: Sir, when the Chair has given the ruling, under what rule that ruling can be challenged? I would like to know, under what rule they arew challenging the ruling of the Chair.

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्री सुरेश पचौरी) : लुक मिस्टर नीलोत्पल बसु, जहां तक यशवंत सिन्हा जी का जो स्टेटमेंट है वह रूल २३८ के अंतर्गत भी है। अगर वह प्रोसीजर रिगार्डिंग एलीगेशन एगेंस्ट द मेम्बर देखें तो उसके अंतर्गत उन्होंने अपनी पोजीशन क्लैरीफाई कर दी है, नम्बर एक और नम्बर दो, जिस स्टेटमेंट का आपने जिक्र किया है लिस्ट आफ बिजिनेस में, उसकी यदि आप शब्दावली देखें तो वह बिल्कुल स्पष्ट है कि - 'Shri Yashwant Sinha to make a statement clarifying his position in response to matter raised... He has made the statement. He has clarified the position. That is why I have given this ruling.

The House is now adjourned till 11 a.m. tomorrow.

The House then adjourned at four minutes past six of the clock, till eleven of the clock on Thursday, the 16th May, 2002